

Two Great American Institutions; The Initiative and The Square Deal

Printed through the kindness of Mr. E. Manchester
Boddy, 401 Van Nuys Building, Los Angeles, Calif.

The people of America have the greatest opportunity for self-government of any people in the world today.

With this, as with every opportunity, goes a responsibility; no people can long enjoy the former and ignore the latter.

Self-government, as provided by the Constitution of the United States, was, and is, an experiment. Experience only could demonstrate whether or not the people would continue to accept the responsibility of self-government, or, through failure to assume it, surrender the right of representation to the scheming politician and predatory interest.

For nearly fifty years the people did surrender this right of representation; during this period of time vast private interests secured control of national resources, moulding the judiciary, legislative and even executive branches of many of the State Governments to their own selfish interests.

The people finally came to realize that their law-makers were not theirs in reality, but belonged, body and soul, to the invisible government—the government of graft and greed. Then came Roosevelt and his big stick; a wave of reform and a demand that a “Government of the people, by the people and for the people” be restored. The Western States took the lead in this movement, for they had suffered most.

The net result of this demand for reform was the enactment in a great many States of what is known as the “Initiative,” “Referendum” and “Recall” measures. These measures

provided the only practical plan whereby the people could try all over again to restore government to the people. The initiative measure provided that if a legislature failed to enact a law, the people could proceed to do so over their heads. The referendum provided a measure whereby the people could nullify an act of the legislature, while the recall made it possible to remove an elected man from office.

These measures did not lessen, but materially increased the responsibility placed upon the voters.

Under the old regime it was comparatively easy to hoodwink and befuddle the sleeping public. Is it just as easy today?

Mr. Voter, have you, personally, studied the great mass of California's initiative measures, many of which were placed on the ballot by a few busybodies, politicians and paid canvassers?

I want to take this occasion to call your attention to just one of these measures—Initiative Measure No. 1. It offers an excellent example of how little some politicians regard the ability of the people of California to think for themselves on November 2nd. As to their ability to vote intelligently there is no question whatsoever, but as to whether or not they will take sufficient interest in this measure to become intelligent on the issues at stake, only the vote on November 2nd can tell.

To put it simply, it is a question whether or not the individual voter will study the measure and make up his own mind and vote, or whether he will simply follow the dictates of the few frenzied politicians who seem willing to go to any extent in stirring up racial antagonism in order to gain their own selfish ends.

THE REAL ISSUE

Space will not permit a complete recital of the entire measure; practically every voter in the State already has access to it.

The outstanding feature of the issue is whether or not the Japanese who came to this country under an international agreement to which we subscribed, will be deprived of an opportunity to make a dignified and honest living.

We owe a moral obligation to these people; they have acquitted themselves in an honorable and gentlemanly way; the worst that can be said by their enemies is that they make a living on land that for years had been unproductive and abandoned; that they are willing to work hard, and lead a thrifty life—and that such people must be undesirable.

It is a fact recognized in all quarters that a moral obligation is the strongest one a nation can assume. We availed ourselves, sixty-six years ago, of Japanese friendship and commerce. We welcomed them to California, and made the most of the opportunity to use them in our fields. Now a few self-centered politicians would have us ignore the responsibility of seeing that the American standard of a square deal be maintained. They would confuse the issue by having the voters pass the proposed measure, and ease their conscience by telling them that their vote would solve some international problem of importance.

There is only one issue at stake on November 2nd so far as this measure is concerned, and so far as the people of California are concerned with it, and that issue is whether or not the people of California will see to it by their votes that the individual Japanese now in California will be given an ordinary American square deal.

I am fully aware of the arguments presented by the interested politicians who seek election on the strength of the agitation and anti-Japanese propaganda they have stirred up.

They tell us that Japanese are being smuggled into the United States through Mexican channels. If this is the case and the politicians making the charge have such a keen interest in matters of truth and public welfare, then they should present evidence of smuggling and report the same to the proper authorities. Every man guilty of entering the United

States illegally should be at once deported. The Japanese government would assist in such procedure in every way possible. Reliable figures show that probably one hundred Japanese have crossed the wide-open border in this manner in a period of twelve months. These men should be dealt with severely, but why under the sun should we enact unfair legislation against the law-abiding Japanese who came here and are here under full protection of the United States?

They say that the picture bride practice is wrong. If it is, then take proper measures to correct the practice. But this matter will not be affected in any manner whatsoever by initiative measure No. 1. It has merely been brought to the forefront in order to give the voter some sort of justification for visiting un-American and unjust legislation on the Japanese who are peacefully raising garden truck and farm produce on one and six-tenths per cent of California's farm land.

A story was published in the Hearst papers recently implying that articles urging that the Japanese be given a square deal were inspired by Japanese dollars. Mr. Hearst has been in the publishing business a long time, and should know what inspires articles. He has been the author of a great many strange and wierd ones throughout the United States for years past. So far as his charge goes, Frank A. Vanderlip, Benj. Ide Wheeler and others, whose articles are now in evidence, may speak for themselves, but so far as the writer of this one is concerned, I shall be pleased to compare the record of myself and my family, which dates back in America some one hundred years—showing service in three wars—with the record of yellow journalism which is alone responsible for the name of Hearst being known today.

E. MANCHESTER BODDY.

Former Lieutenant of Infantry, U. S. A., A. E. F.
Manager Pacific Coast Branch New York Times.
Current History Magazine, War Volume Dept.